

Series - Going Deeper – Salt and Light

Date/s - 24 Mar 2019

Topic - Matthew 5:1-16

Speaker/s - Pastor Ernie Song

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like “Beauty of the Blood (Surrounded)”, “Here I Bow”, “Glorious One” or “Worthy Of It All”.

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Embrace our calling as the salt of the earth and the light of the world
2. Live out these qualities to overcome the decay in our culture and to bring light to the darkness.

Word [45 min]

Preaching from Matthew 5:1-16 (which is part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount), Pastor Ernie expounded on our ultimate purpose as disciples of Christ, i.e. to imitate Him in all areas of our lives. Our mind, our character, our relationships and our lifestyles must conform to His. Jesus shows us how to do that in verses 13 and 14 where He calls us *salt* and *light*.

When Jesus said we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, He was not saying we should be, or that we have the potential to be, salt and light. We are *already* the salt and the light when we surrender our life to Jesus as Lord and Saviour. (See 2 Corinthians 5:17)

Salt of the Earth

Salt was used in biblical times as a preservative and to add flavour to food. So high was its value that Roman soldiers were even paid in salt which is where the saying, *worth his salt*, comes from. So when Jesus said we are the salt of the earth, he was referring to something vitally important and essential. If the salt lost its flavour, Jesus warned, it would be worthless and had to be thrown out.

The true test of genuine salt is to see what happens to its environment when it is there. Salt works only when it penetrates into food, but it becomes useless when contaminated by other substances. It must remain pure to do its job – see 2 Corinthians 5:17. We, likewise, must penetrate into society while keeping ourselves from being influenced by sin in the world. The true test of being a disciple is to see what happens to one’s environment when one is there.

We will know if we have passed that test on Judgment Day when Jesus separates the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:32-40). Pastor Ernie challenged us not to disappoint Jesus but to imitate Him in His ministry on

earth, i.e. to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the oppressed, and healing for the blind (Luke 4:18,19).

Light of the World

Light is used as an analogy for the nature of God and the nature of a disciple. Jesus calls Himself the Light of the world in John 8:12. In Matthew 5:14-16, He turns to us and calls *us* light of the world and tells us to “let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven.”

The nature of light is that it exposes the darkness. As light, we are to lift up the brightness of Christ with confidence and allow him to shine through us to reveal the darkness of the world. Jesus tells us that the purpose of our influence is to be distinct to Christ so that the world around us would encounter the love of Christ and give glory to God. (See also Isaiah 9:2)

The Challenge

But Jesus warns us that, just as salt could lose its effectiveness, light could also lose its usefulness when we hid it under a basket – see Matthew 5:15. Pastor Ernie compared this analogy to our failure as disciples if we only light up inside the walls of our church. Although we are not to be *of* the world, we are to be *in* the world. We are citizens of an earthly kingdom as well as a heavenly one. As citizens, we must participate in culture, in society, and in every sphere of influence to bring light to the darkness.

Pastor Ernie gave out a call to the church to let the salt in us be tasted in our culture and the light in us be seen in our community, and challenged us to begin by volunteering with RiverLife Community Services in their work among the poor and needy.

Discussion Questions

1. **Read Matthew 5:13-16. When Jesus says, “you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world,” He is effectively saying, “You are my plan for transforming this world.” So, imagine that you are a part of the crowd of people on that hillside. Jesus looks at you – not someone else, but you – and says, “You are my plan.” What thoughts immediately come to your mind?** [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: *A recap question to help us take stock of Jesus’ calling to us as disciples. He was addressing His followers then but He is now speaking to us directly from God’s Word. What is our initial response when we hear this? Do we just let His words sail by without even considering how huge the implication is to our lives? Or will we take His words seriously enough to do what we are redeemed to do, i.e. to transform the world? Either we are salt and light by the grace of God, or we are willfully disobeying the One who saved us for such a time as this. If we are being salt and light, we should be living a radical counter-cultural life in our society. The way we treat people, money, sex, success and power should all point to a better alternative and a more authentic way to be human.*

For deeper insights into Matthew 5:13-20, David Pawson has a two-part series called Being Salt and Light on YouTube <https://qoo.gl/inwSKK>

- 2. What do you think Jesus meant about salt losing its flavour and light hidden under a basket? How is it possible to become 'unsalty'? Can you think of ways we sometimes conceal our light? What are some challenges that we might face in living as salt and light in Singapore?** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: *A reflect and relate question. The warnings Jesus gave us are very significant. As salt, we are to beware of being contaminated by the culture around us. A compromised church is a contaminated church. Oswald Chambers said, "we need more Christians who are distinctively Christian; he is the one who points out to the Church of the very fact that it is so easy for us to become contaminated by the world." As light, we are to beware of hiding our true identity in Christ by looking and sounding like the world. The major religious groups of Jesus' day each had different approaches to relating to the world. The Sadducees accommodate into the dominant culture. The Pharisees separate into a subculture. And the Essenes isolate from all outside culture. Which of these approaches are we as Christians most tempted to adopt today? Salt does nothing good if it stays in the saltshaker. Light does no good if we hide it under a basket. It has to permeate the darkness. If we isolate ourselves within the four walls, separated from the rest of the world, our salt and light will not reach anyone. John Stott said, "We should not ask, 'What is wrong with the world?' for that diagnosis has already been given. Rather we should ask, 'What has happened to salt and light?'"*

Find out what happens when we either lose our saltiness or hide our light, in "Salt and Light: Finding the Legitimate Balance in the Christian Life" in CrossExamined.org <https://goo.gl/Xo8X3C>

- 3. If we are the salt and light, what impact should you be having in your workplace, community and church? Give specific examples of how you can achieve this in your everyday relationships between employer-employee, citizen-foreigner, rich-poor, husband-wife, parent-child, pastor-congregant, etc.** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: *A response question. The sermon mentions two functions of salt in the ancient world. Salt was a preservative to stop the decaying process and as a flavour to enhance the good that is already present. Consider the needs for preservation and flavouring in our families, neighborhoods, workplace, community and church. Light, on the other hand, reveals and exposes darkness more effectively when it is lifted and put on display where people are able to see it. Jesus said our light is not necessarily in the witness of our words, but in the witness of our deeds – our "good works" (verse 16). The Sermon on the Mount spells out some of those good works. In humility and submission to God, we work for right relations, for merciful actions, and for peace. When we live as people of blessing, we are salt and light in every place and in every role God calls us to. Encourage members to take up Pastor Ernie's challenge to be salt and light in the community by joining RCS to meet the needs of the poor and the broken in our midst.*

For inspiring stories of Christians in Singapore living out their calling as salt and light, check out saltandlight.sg a gathering place for Christians to unite in spirit and purpose to see God in the 9-to-5 and make a difference in the marketplace.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Every RiverLifer to be the *salt* – keeping the culture from moral decay, and the *light* – bringing the hope of Jesus to the hopeless. Pray for ourselves that we will live out the Word and reflect Jesus in our lives.

Announcements

1. MegaLife Camp 2019

Fri-Mon, 14-17 Jun | Amverton Heritage Resort, Malacca

Registration is now open. Do encourage your child to sign up and set aside these 4 days to encounter God and community.

Early Bird Rate: \$200 (23 Mar – 7 Apr)

Normal Rate: \$230 (13 Apr – 14 Apr)

2. Alpha Course

Sun, 5 May – 28 Jul 19 | 2pm – 4pm (12 sessions)

Register now at bit.ly/rlcalpha. For enquiries, please contact Karen Koh at 65114139, email her at karenkoh@riverlife.org.sg or visit our Guest Welcome Lounge on Sundays.

Church Vision:

A radiant disciple-making church catalysing Kingdom transformation in our communities and the nations.

Mission:

We exist to make disciples who behold Christ and reveal Him.